

SEDAR Steering Committee
Conference Call Minutes
October 27, 2006

Attendance: Nancy Thompson, Roy Crabtree, Wayne Swingle, Robin Riechers, Bob Mahood, Graciela Garcia-Moliner, John Carmichael, Rick Leard

Issue: GMFMC request to move the King mackerel benchmark to SEDAR 16, Spring 2008.

The Steering Committee met via conference call to discuss a request by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council to swap the species for SEDARs 16 (Gulf yellowedge grouper and tilefish) and 20 (King Mackerel) so that king mackerel could be assessed in 2008, thereby providing more up-to-date status determinations and ABC values.

Challenges to conducting a benchmark assessment of king mackerel in 2008 were discussed:

- 1) Preparation and Planning Time. The SEDAR 16 assessment cycle will begin in approximately 18 months. Initial data preparations, especially work to complete age and growth information, has already begun for SEDAR 16 stocks.
- 2) Resolving Assessment Deficiencies. Attention must be devoted to address assessment issues identified in SEDAR 5, notably the need to update age and growth models.
- 3) Resolving Stock Partitions. The Gulf and South Atlantic Councils intend to amend the CMP FMP to address landings partitioning within the mixing zone. The amendment is scheduled for completion in 2008. Partitioning landings in the mixing zone is a critical element of this assessment, and the SEFSC has repeatedly stated that a mackerel benchmark assessment should not be considered until the Councils agree on a partition.

The Committee discussed the possibility of updating the SEDAR 5 assessment with recent landings. There are significant cons to this option:

- 1) The SAFMC SSC rejected the SEDAR 5 benchmark assessment and concluded that the assessment did not represent best available science with regard to the stock partition in the mixing zone.
- 2) Simply updating landings without including recent age or survey information would provide an erroneous assessment that could not be considered adequate by the SEFSC.
- 3) A simple update would not address various critical issues identified by the SEDAR 5 review panel, both SSC's, and the joint SSC sub-committee charged with reviewing allocation options.

The Committee agreed that the primary need for the immediate future is information and analyses addressing the alternatives that will be considered in the coming amendment. It

is believed that the SEDAR 5 benchmark assessment framework provides an appropriate tool for evaluating these alternatives. Once the amendment is approved and an appropriate stock partitioning scheme is in place, a benchmark assessment of king mackerel can be prepared.

The SEFSC will develop alternative assessment runs using the assessment approach and data available for the SEDAR 5 benchmark that address the mixing zone partitioning options approved for scoping by the SAFMC and GMFMC mackerel committees. Runs will also be developed to address the suggestions of the joint SSC sub-committee on mackerel stock id. Scoping options and the sub-committee recommendations are reproduced here followed by an itemized list of alternatives to clarify this task.

Scoping Options:

MOTION: SCOPE 3 ALTERNATIVES:

- 1) NO ACTION
- 2) DADE/MONROE – NORTH OF LINE 100% ATLANTIC; SOUTH OF LINE 100% GULF
- 3) MONROE – 100% GULF; VOLUSIA THROUGH DADE – 50/50
(APPROVED BY GULF COMMITTEE)
(APPROVED BY SOUTH ATLANTIC COMMITTEE)

Excerpted Sub-Committee Recommendations:

- 1) It is likely that 20-80% of the mixing zone fish are Atlantic stock.

*Steering Committee Recommendation: Evaluate the endpoints :
Gulf:Atlantic of 20:80 and 80:20*

- 2) Develop simulation scenarios based on 20-80% Atlantic with a midpoint at 50%.

{Comment on Sub-Committee option (2): Upon further discussion and reflection, it is agreed that this alternative will not provide results that differ from a simple deterministic run based on a 50/50 split in the mixing zone. A simple 50/50 split should be evaluated}

Steering Committee Recommendation: Simplify, evaluate 50/50 split.

Stock Partition Options to Evaluate:

1. Current Mixing Zone Partitions
 1. 20% Gulf / 80% SA
 2. 80% Gulf / 20% SA
 3. 50% Gulf / 50% SA
2. Alternative Mixing Zone Boundary: Dade/Monroe
 1. 100% Atlantic Dade & North, 100% Monroe & South.
3. Alternative Mixing Zone: Volusia - Dade with Monroe = Gulf
 1. 50/50 Split Volusia - Dade (No. of Volusia = SA, So. of Dade = Gulf) and????
 2. 20% Gulf / 80% SA for Volusia - Dade (others no change)
 3. 80% Gulf / 20% SA for Volusia - Dade (others no change)

It was acknowledged that the SEDAR benchmark schedule will be reviewed at the January 2007 Steering Committee meeting. At that time the Committee will considered those stocks to be assessed for SEDARs 18 - 20 and decide if it is appropriate to assess king mackerel sooner.

The Committee was informed that FL FWC/FWRI is considering providing the lead on an assessment of mutton snapper. John Carmichael will work with FWRI to develop an appropriate schedule, and will consider holding these workshops in conjunction with SEDAR 14 or 15.